

UW 25-114

DOCKET FILE COPY ORIGINAL

RECEIVED

MAR 18 1996

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
OFFICE OF SECRETARY

-----  
Dick Burkhalter (dickb@aloha.net) writes:

Dear Chairman Hunt,

I fully support the FCC's NOI regarding captioning, with one exception. I would like to see all references to the word "closed" removed from FCC rules. Closed captioning is expensive. It requires specialized equipment and highly trained people to produce. There are many ways that closed captions can be disturbed or destroyed once they are encoded. There are many reasons for the high costs of closed captioning, some of them valid, many of them not. But the real reason for my wanting the word "closed" eliminated is because it focuses on the method rather than the result.

For the past two years, I have been researching captioning, in an attempt to find low-cost ways to caption programs produced for local Public Access TV stations. I have finally found a method, using an ordinary personal computer and a little hardware added on, plus a program made for elementary school children to allow them to create their own multi-media presentations. I'm in the process of getting this installed in my local Public Access station, for use by producers of Public, Education and Government shows. It is NOT closed captioning, but it is effective and it is inexpensive, and the captioning can be done by anyone who can type.

The focus needs to be removed from the methodology and placed on the results, where it belongs. Besides broadcast TV and video tapes, captioning is valid and needed for many other forms of communications, including but not limited to, multi-media displays in public and private facilities of all kinds, CD-ROM displays for individual or group use, Internet Web displays and many other forms of communication which are now only accessible to people who can hear.

"Closed Captioning" is not what we need; we need equal access!

Sincerely,

Dick Burkhalter  
150 Ohana Street  
Kapaa, HI 96746 dickb@aloha.net

-----  
Cynthia D. Waddell (wddllc@ci.sj.ca.us) writes:

This activity for improving the quality of life for persons with disabilities is a breath of fresh air! Across the country organizations of and for persons with disabilities are embracing this

No. of Copies rec'd \_\_\_\_\_  
List ABOVE

historic change making telecommunications truly accessible. Your efforts are truly remarkable.

I wear two hearing aids and have spent all my energies since the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act to assist in compliance efforts. This dialogue has been long needed. I was a Public Interest Scholar in Disability Rights Law at Santa Clara University School of Law. When I clerked for the California Center for Law and the Deaf, we dealt with the Oakland, CA fire and the difficulty of no emergency broadcast captioning during that fire. Your dialogue today is so important because captioning should be available for all who needs access.

Today I wear federal, state, county and city hats concerning ADA compliance. At the federal level, I am participating as a Mediator for the USDOJ ADA mediation project of the Keybridge Foundation. Telecommunications is a vital concern for my community and I find that the public needs much more education about how access can be provided for persons with disabilities.

At the state level, I am a voting member of the Code Advisory Committee, Access, of the California Building Standards Commission. I am providing building code recommendations to conform with the concerns of the ADAAG.

At the county level, I am a Commissioner serving on the Advisory Commission for Persons with Disabilities. We advise the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors on disability matters. These three "hats" are all voluntary but very fulfilling.

At the city level, I am the Disability Access Coordinator for the City of San Jose. Here, I implement the ADA and we are watching very closely the captioning and audio-description issues. I staff the City Disability Advisory Commission and some members have indicated their excitement about the NOI regarding captioning and video description.

I am also an ADA/504 Compliance Consultant for Santa Clara University. One of the constant problems I run into in the academic world is the use of videos as training tools in classrooms. Frequently, videotapes made by faculty for training purposes as well as commercial videotapes do not have captioning.

I share this with you because of my deep involvement with access. I am a beneficiary of the ADA and heavily rely on assistive listening devices. I am also concerned about the pcs 1900 technology. If I cannot use it, and it interferes with my hearing aids and assistive listening devices, we will have not improved access. I rely on my t-coils to hear at assembly meetings, courts, movie theaters, plays, conference meetings, etc., and if there is interference with my right to use assistive listening devices, all that I have gained with the ADA will be lost.

If possible, I would like to receive information on the activities of the Disabilities Issues Task Force and how I may apply for an appointment to the Task Force. Thank you and I congratulate you for establishing this web site.

---

John M. Joy (jmj@vfr.com) writes:

Oh, Gawd, is this all you bureaucratic types can think about - MORE GOVERNMENT, MORE GOVERNMENT, MORE GOVERNMENT?!? I always find it amusing when bureaucrats come up with more ways to ensure a continuing paycheck.

WRT closed captioning: again we see an attempt to use the force of government to cater to a special interest. Cold-hearted as the sentiment may be, this is exactly what we're talking about. Locally, we are struggling with the same sort of issues, though involving public education - in many instances, taxpayers are forced to pony up tens of thousands of dollars per year to educate ONE child. While I sympathize with the parents of such a child, I have a problem with the concept that their circumstances constitute a claim on me or my assets, enforceable at the point of the taxman's gun.

Compulsory closed captioning and video descriptioning - what's next? Should we compel the industry to come up with ways of broadcasting television video in Braille? How about closed-captioned radio?

Like it or not, Mr. Chairman, you cannot legislate utopia.

JMJ

---

brian b. buchfink (bennett@mcn.net) writes:

I agree with you on all your comments. There are reasons to help those who can't help themselves with the big boys of commerce.

---

Nolan Crabb (ncrabb@access.digex.net) writes:

As one who would benefit from the commission's efforts regarding audio description, I applaud this most recent step forward. Perhaps not all is hopeless where progress for blind Americans is concerned.

---

maynard wilcox (wilcox@mailbox.syr.edu) writes:

When I was 18 I lost one/half of my hearing in my left ear from a bout of measles. I suffer Tinnitus to this day.

Therefore I'm just deaf enough to know there are things that I may miss.

However as a history buff I know that there are certain things that require a strong rule to develop.

There is no real wars (as yet) If there is technology that will further voice technology and voice to text is just the other half of what you are looking at. then there should be an irritant

to make the technology cheaper and more widely available.  
I would look at it as a stepping stone to the universal translator.  
Thank you for listening. m.

-----  
George E. DeVilbiss (GeoDV@mail.erols.com) writes:

As a hard of hearing person closed captioning is a vital part of TV watching for me. If a program is not closed captioning then it is useless for me to watch it! While the cost of closed captioning a program is expensive, the cost is small compared to the cost of broadcasting it and the large number hearing impaired persons who will not watch it if not captioned should make the sponsor want to do it. Let's hope the sponsor realizes it! Of course I would like to see captioning mandatory on all programs although I can watch sporting events without captioning I do miss the comments by the commentator.

As a hearing impaired person, I appreciate your efforts to assure that everything possible is accessible to us.

-----  
James A. Benet (74312.501@compuserve.com) writes:

I think close caption is a very good idea. I am hard of hearing and being able to read the spoken words often makes a difference in understanding what is being said.

In commercial broadcasting, I do not believe it is necessary to mandate close caption services. If I cannot understand what is being said, I will turn on close caption to read the text. If the program does not supply close caption, I will turn off the program. (Most of the programs on TV are not worth the time spent on watching them with or without close caption -- however, this is another issue.)

-----  
Barry A. Wilson (Barry@dsp.com) writes:

Just to give you a brief history. As part of the Mobile Amateur Radio Club Activities several years ago I helped sponsor a challenge under the auspices of Volunteers of America which we as Amateur Radio Operators wanted to help in all aspects of communications. We purchased decoder boxes for distribution to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. It became so ever presently clear that this select group of citizens were missing out on warnings, especially concerning Storm Alerts which you should know that Amateur Radio is very much involved in through NOAA SKYWARN program. This was just a small part of what we could do as Amateur Radio Licensees to thank our communities for the privilege and use of our radio spectrum resources.

Respectfully  
Barry A. Wilson  
Amateur Operator KA0BBQ  
Barry@dsp.com

KA0BBQ@aol.com  
B.Wilson/CGCSherman@cgsntp.uscg.mil

---

Robert G. Schaffrath (rschaffrath@kraft.com) writes:

I have found closed captioning to have a benefit even though I have no hearing disability. In our corporations fitness center we have televisions on all of the time for the entertainment of the members. Due to the noise, the volume on these televisions is turned down. As luck would have it, these models have built in closed captioning. After I had experimented with the feature one evening, the positive comments on the service where overwhelming. The biggest drawback right now is the lack of captioned programs. Any improvement in this area would be a benefit not only to those with hearing impairments but to those who may be in environments that prevent hearing.

---

Mike Gray (mgray1@mail.state.mo.us) writes:

Mr. Chairman, I ask that the effort to provide more closed captioning also specifically include EBS information. Many TV and cable systems do not provide the information in text, especially when weather radar is being described. Some stations have tiny watch and warning graphics displayed in corners that one can see only with magnifying glasses. Some stations broadcast EBS tests with a EBS graphic that does not include the word test!

---

Joe Foley (jmf+@osu.edu) writes:

I certainly agree that both closed captions and video descriptions are important. I hope that the FCC will "encourage" program producers/distributors to provide such information. And, I hope that encouragement will be strong enough to produce real results, not just window dressing.

---

Bruce Warrington (bruce@ancc.com) writes:

I can't believe that closed captioning is this important to the FCC. With a shrinking budget, closing field offices, and the exploding telecommunications areas and personal RF services, this should be at the bottom of the list. What about assuring that the basic services we already have, like local telephone companies, provide minimum service levels during the upcoming competition for this area? What about speeding up standards and regulation that allows our telco companies to embrace the things we need to foster higher speed data and video to our homes? What about the problems of sharing Govt, ISM, ham radio, and personal RF services? And we're worried that people paying for cable don't get closed captioning? It's a consumer oriented service. If nobody liked it, they don't have to pay for it, and they can go back to broadcast TV. If they demand it, cable companies will respond, or lose customers. This is the whole principle of "market driven" areas like cable. I think you should be focusing on too many things other than this.

-----  
James Riley (RILEYJIMH@aol.com) writes:

1. My eyes nearly popped of my head at the cost figures of \$2000-\$5000 & 20-30 Man-hours per hour of tv captioning. Just think if legal stenos were paid at that rate ? Who would be in court if lawyers were billing at a portionitaly higher rate ?

I must read the NOI for more info. The only "captioned" video that I've seen has been on PBS or C-SPAN and wasn't overly impressed with the informational content that I read. Of course, I've never been accused of brevity in speech or writing !

The C-SPAN CAPTIONING has improved greatly over this last year.

2. Small complaint: Some of the on-line providers tend to treat their customers like a certain phone company or IRS used to treat their customers.

Sincerely,

James H Riley

-----  
Michael John Behrent (mbehrent@tpo.org) writes:

Chairman Hundt,

The absolute MOST the Government should do is grant tax and/or licensing breaks to those companies who provide these extra services to the disabled and handicapped. To mandate private industry bear the cost and red tape of these advances in access is beyond the bounds of it's constituted authority.

If there is a comercial market, it will be filled. Government mandate is a violation of the limits put on the Federal Government by Constitutional authority. It's akin to the Government mandating HDTV regardless of practical considerations, public need, or desirability. I would hope the

FCC has more sense and integrity than to issue such regulations that put an uncalled for burden on every citizen.

Regards;

Michael J. Behrent (N9NCR)

-----  
Prof. Henry C. Armstrong III (hank@hank.com) writes:

I support your views on closed captioning.

-----  
Harvey Leong (hleong@localnet.com) writes:

Closed caption is an important aid to hearing impaired. My wife and I appreciate programs that have closed captions.

As America ages, so will all the "boomers".

-----

D. Richard Miller (rmiller@us.net) writes:

Dear Chairman Hundt:

Thanks for the opportunity to correspond with you.

I have a couple of comments on the NOI dealing with accessibility of programming to deaf people and blind people. It is probably not advisable to require all content providers to include closed captioning and video description for their programming. I think that the reasons are not solely economic, but also artistic. Here are a couple of considerations:

1. Many programs are inappropriate for video description and maybe even closed captioning. The information rate of a combined video and audio program are far beyond that of scrolling text or even descriptive speech - that's why we have television!
2. How will the law specify the adequacy of closed captioning or video description? Must every word uttered appear in closed captioning? How much of a scene must be described in order for a program to be compliant? It seems to me that this will be extremely subjective. If the law is too strict, it could be considered an infringement of first amendment rights of content providers since it will artificially limit the information rate of their programs, and therefore their ability to freely express themselves.
3. What about small markets with few disabled persons? Will they be subject to the same constraints as all other providers?

As I'm sure you are aware, this could be a real Pandora's box. Yet the disabled community should not be ignored. Let's try looking at it from the consumer's point of view, rather than the provider's. There are about 80 channels available in my house. Two of them broadcast exclusively in languages other than english.

I don't watch those channels. Three or four of my channels are text only with some kind of non-essential sound track. Sometimes I watch those channels if their content interests me. What have these examples to do with access for the disabled? While I could, theoretically, learn Japanese, Farsi, Arabic, and Spanish, it is unlikely that I will, so the audio portions of these channels are essentially inaccessible for me, just as english language programs are inaccessible for non-english speaking people, and all audio tracks are inaccessible for the deaf. Yet the channels coexist on the same cable with their own audiences. Maybe the answer for the disabled is to require a certain number of channels or programs be accessible to them, rather than all of them. What's wrong with a channel that is video only for the deaf? Or a TV (radio would make more sense) station with audio only for the blind?

Don't burden all programming with accessibility requirements that limit the information rate which is the whole reason for the existence of the medium.

Thanks for reading this :)

Rick Miller

-----  
John Steven Cullings (cullings@hooked.net) writes:

Dear Mr. Chairman,

Jan. 2, 1996

I believe that close-captioning is a good idea and should be endorsed by the FCC as long as the American taxpayer is NOT forced to pay for it.

It should be supported the same way that normal TV is now supported -- by commercials or viewer donations.

There are hundreds or thousands of types of handicaps. Sight or hearing impaired persons should not get preferential treatment over any other handicap nor should the taxpayer be forced to pay for any handicap aids without his/her consent.

Sincerely, John S. Cullings

-----  
Lillias A. Freeman-Hogan (lillias@aol.com) writes:

I just learned of your Notice of Inquiry today, from the Staff Interpreter of my office, the Kansas City Service Center of the Internal Revenue Service. As a producer of training videos in a Federal facility, I have been captioning videos ever since I figured out how to force my character generator and animation programs to create open captions. I now use a PC-based closed captioning program, and caption every employee training video as a matter of course.

I have also been promoting closed captioning amo (sic)

-----  
James Nielsen (sght46a@prodigy.com) writes:

I have noted since purchasing a television with CC capabilities that many "live" television broadcasts (mostly sports and news) are closed-captioned. If local broadcasters are providing on-the-spot CC for their newscasts, there is no way they are shelling out \$2,000 per news hour. What has to be happening is very simple: voice recognition technology. Voice to text translation in a computer is just becoming viable as a proven technology. IBM has done some very wonderful things with making this technology work reliably and cost-effectively. I cannot see where it would cost any one station more than a few thousand dollars to provide speech-to-text for all broadcasts. That is money well-spent, in my opinion, to further the sense of "community involvement" on the part of each station. Now, to have the Commission require a station to provide this service would be going a little too far. However if television licensees were given the right amount of information on how they!

can use inexpensive CC equipment to their advantage while providing a very valuable community service, and they were to include that in their re-filing documents at license renewal time as having provided a community service for the handicapped, it will be a win-win for everyone.

-----



-----  
Tom Mann (C'Serve 71220, 1632) writes:

Dear Chairman Hundt:

I have been involved in closed captioning for a number of years now with various television stations, and have pushed for captioning of a number of programs while with NBC in Washington in the 1980's, and with Disney in Los Angeles in the early 90's.

There are some real, expensive practical problems involved in captioning e-v-e-r-y-t-h-i-n-g that must be born in mind. First, to have an hour of programming per week professionally captioned by the National Captioning Institute in the late 1980's had a cost of approximately \$80,000 per year. The same services quoted by the same outfit in 1993 yielded a quote slightly less than double that amount. That sum is essentially unaffordable for anything but an extremely highly rated, network program in today's economy.

We have developed several computer techniques which allow us to caption the local news on television stations, however, these techniques are often not complete answers for the hearing impaired, since they simply encode into caption the scripts from which the local news talent reads, and do not describe the field video, nor does the text translate "talking heads" of the newsmaker or interviewee.

Most television stations which operate in markets where there is a significant population of the hearing impaired would like to caption their news. The problem is that few advertisers are willing to support this narrow effort.

Sincerely,

Tom Mann

-----  
Rachel C. Loyd (RLoyd@k12.puyallup.wednet.edu) writes:

I would like to ask that you support closed captioning for videos, television, movies, and computer software programming. The ability to understand through the use of closed captions has enabled me to enjoy watching video and television once again. I know that I am not alone in my desire to see this service continue.

-----  
Kathy Harper (harperk@ionet.net) writes:

Chairman Hundt;

As a visually-impaired person myself, and as Vice President of the

Narrative Television Network, I appreciate your strong stance for equal access by ALL Americans.

As you know, since 1988, as a private company owned and operated by blind and visually-impaired people, the Narrative Television Network has video described more programming, to a wider audience, and at a lower cost than any one in the field. This has been done on a commercial basis, with over 1,200 broadcast and cable affiliates and in partnership with networks, syndicators and producers.

In 1994, through a cooperative agreement with the U. S. Department of Education, we were able to expand our work even further. The extensive positive audience feedback, industry surveys, and numerous awards attest to the quality and consistency of our work.

The future of accessible programming for millions of blind and visually-impaired Americans is bright, if we will all work together.

Once again, I applaud your stance and hope that you will give all of us at NTN every opportunity to cooperate with you and provide whatever experience and input you may deem important. Please let us know what we can do to help you in this vital effort.

Respectfully,

Kathy Harper  
Vice President  
Narrative Television Network  
5840 South Memorial Drive, Suite 312  
Tulsa, Oklahoma 74145  
Telephone: (918) 627-1000  
Facsimile: (918) 627-4101  
Internet Address: harperk@ionet.net

-----  
Mike Cashman (mike.cashman@state.mn.us) writes:

Good Morning.....Mr. Hundt, I'm Mike Cashman from Minnesota. I have a question for you for you. I am concerned about the lack of quality captioning with our local news. Please help me understand your procedures. In order to issue license to television stations, such as local TV stations, is there a criteria? Do you check to see if they are meeting the needs of deaf and hard of hearing people? I am not sure of waivers or exemptions....if a federal agency like yours is required to monitor the airwaves, etc. If that is the case, then why are not TV stations fully compatible? We do not have real time caption- ing in Minnesota. Does it make sense if myself as a deaf taxpayer pays for federal programs, like the FCC and then find inadequate captioning? It does not sound appropriate? Please advise. Also, I am with

the legislative committee in Minnesota and we are wondering of what options or actions we should under- take....We want quality newsreporting and that includes on site reporting and to add real-time captioning.. We are not satisfied with the current teleprompting. We miss out essential weather reporting...miss out banter talk. It will not be a problem with real time captioning. Are TV stations exempt?  
If so, why? Why not require them to have real time captioning capabilities, if not, why not?  
Thanks for your time and look forward to a response....

Have a good day!

Mike Cashman

---

Gerard R. Laurer (glaurer@chester.ny.frontiercomm.net) writes:

Dear Sir, I applaud your efforts to promote closed captioning and video description. As we approach the 21st century, in an era of accelerating technological change, in which an ever increasing effort is required - even for those blessed with sight and hearing all five senses reasonably intact - to understand and keep step with the world around us. The difficulties encountered by the many who don't have these advantages must be daunting. Thank you for your efforts on their behalf. G. Laurer

---

Jim Conklin (conklin@lmsc.lockheed.com) writes:

I am interested in understanding how closed caption will be supported in the digital TV world. I assume that Direct Broadcast Satellites have CC in their content and have established some standard for the transport of the data. Perhaps MPEG2 has a standard for CC?

Please let me know where I can find out more information about CC in digital TV.

---

Linda Kalter (lkalt@magicnet.net) writes:

I agree with your assessment that closed captioning is needed on more programming. Although I rarely use it, on some programs (especially English mysteries) I find it very helpful.

For educational programming, however, some gov't. funding should be provided (that is, on PBS) since all funding is being cut and it would be disappointing to have a program not happen only because closed captioning was not included in the budget.

---

Benjamin M. Lowe (blowe@cpmail.att.com) writes:

I agree in part to making the information highway accessible to all and to give people with disabilities equal access. As one of the original members of the Volunteers for Medical Engineering which was one of Bush's Thousand Points of Light, I would whole heartedly agree. However, we should not slow the progress of the information superhighway to to all the population groups we can think of. There are many more than we can even imagine. If the information superhighway is of any worth and can provide benefits to all population groups than the minority groups will find a way to get on by ways that may spur further technological development. The U.S. technological infrastructure is at stake. We, as a citizens of the U.S., who need jobs and a sense of security, are willing to work hard to make America the best country in the world in all ways, technologically, socially, culturally ... but it needs your help. Make the decisions to give the U.S. the technological edge it should have. This will provide jobs to the majority. If the majority do not have jobs the minority cannot prosper. I am glad that you keep the disabled in mind as you progress with your negotiations. It exemplifies the caring society that we are. But keep in mind there are technologies that yet to reach the market that can enable everyone, able-bodied, disabled, poor and wealthy, to access the information superhighway. Please, focus on keeping the U.S. a prosperous, as well as, a technology leader.

---

Anthony Rohl (trohl@pop3.oro.net) writes:

The Americans with Disabilities certainly was a watershed event. More than a watershed, it was a tidalwave that buried American business in even more burdensome regulation. But I digress. Closed captioning is a beneficial service to a lot of people, senior citizens like myself included who don't hear the full sound spectrum anymore.

What I don't quite understand is the rumored intent to sell for billions of dollars more of the ether. as we used to call it. Is there ANYTHING that occurs in nature that the government doesn't seek to pin a price tag on?

---

Dr Don Carpenter (wycd99a@Prodigy.com) writes:

Mr Hunt..

Regarding your column on closed captioning.. There's a benefit to non-disabled persons such as myself that some television manufacturers have chosen to capitalize on.. and that's the ability to quickly and easily enable captioning through the "mute" button on remote controls. How nice it is when there's a phone call for my wife, and I can cancel the television volume for HER benefit, and still catch everything said on a program.

It's also a great help vewing videotapes when you simply can't understand the actor because of background noise, foreign accent or whatever. On-demand CC certainly solves this. I know such uses of CC technology probably weren't what the Commission had in mind.. but I thought you'd like to know we're ALL benefiting from it.

Regarding rulemaking involving Line 22. It already bothers me that certain signals are encoded into transmitted video that I, as an end user, have no way of decoding. I worry that Line 22 data transmissions would quickly become "subscription" services. I'm of the opinion that if a broadcaster transmits it, then it should be for the free unrestricted use of the public in the coverage area.

And, as long as I'm writing, is there some rule that prohibits the manufacture of automobile radios capable of receiving television audio?

Dr Don Carpenter  
WYCD-FM  
Detroit

---

Nicki Z. Kearley (kearley@atmore.gulf.net) writes:

Captioning is an absolute necessity! Everything on television should have closed captioning available. Closed captioning lets deaf people know what is happening in the news as well as provides entertainment. It is also a learning tool for many since they can see a word and the action for that word at the same time. My request is for closed captioning to be on all programs and commercials on TV.

THanks. Nicki Kearley

---

Thomas Clinton Field (feardog@mail.utexas.edu) writes:

I agree that closed captioning furthers the goal of equitable access to broadcast material; however, the proposal that closed captioning should be a federal mandate is problematic. Despite the benevolent intentions of such an action, it would still entail federally mandated content in a telecommunications arena that has become increasingly active in circumventing government oversight through the assertion of first amendment rights. Also, such rules would be biased in favor of the large entertainment conglomerates. Three thousand dollars may not be significant to the budget of a \$400,000 an hour network television drama; however, it could cripple smaller production companies, not to mention the producers of community access television producers. It might also serve to crush the already struggling LPTV medium.

tcf

---

Phillip L. Smith (psmith@vunet.vinu.edu) writes:

I find the goal of every program being made available to hearing impaired citizens very noble. I agree that many national programs should be made available for these citizens. On a local level, however, this is not possible without government funding. What about the PBS stations that are already faced with cutbacks and even total elimination of funds. Our local PBS station is preparing to eliminate staff. Should mandates be made that would force additional payroll expenses when funds are being cut and payroll is being eliminated just to keep the lights

on? Local programming should be exempted from forced closed captioning.

-----  
Richard Hall (netlink@netlinkcorp.com) writes:

I read with great interest about the goals of the FCC with regards to making the information superhighway (IS) accessible to disabled persons and most importantly, the disabled children. Our company is an internet provider in Bluefield, VA. We have been concerned about the ability to provide this access for the people you mentioned as well. Audio and Video are going to play a very important part on the Internet very soon and in some cases already do. There is one company Progressive Networks, Inc. that has developed a software that allows for audio on the Internet without downloading the sound. They are also in the process of using this audio player combined with video. Also there are more companies developing voice activated computer capability as well as touch pads. Once this becomes "widely" available, the (IS) will explode and allow access to anyone. The primary barrier obviously is cost. As a commercial for profit company, we are concerned about the ability or fairness to provide a service to the public. Our company provides not only a connection to the Internet but we also support our users when problems arise as they so often do with this kind of transfer of information. Plus, this technology is new to many people. Our company has taken the perspective that these people need to be taught and helped to overcome the problems encountered. Telephone companies and Schools are not setup for this kind of support and do a disservice to the technology by putting people on it without supporting them. Thank You For Allowing This Forum to Respond. Richard Hall  
President, NET-LINK Corp. Bluefield, VA netlink@netlinkcorp.com

-----  
G. Gordon Apple, PhD (applegg@netvoyage.net) writes:

1. Encouragement? - YES.
2. Grants to implement it? - YES
3. Mandates? - HELL NO

The FCC and the government has no business and no constitutional right to mandate that program providers **MUST** provide anything in order to be aired.

The argument " tragic and silly to win the war for closed captioning on a few channels and to lose it on the 500 channels" will be greatly exacerbated when object-oriented computer-based broadcasting is used to transmit thousands of low-cost "channels". Are you really going to insists on spending up to \$5000 per "channel" when the cost of broadcasting such an educational or other specialized "channel" may be less than \$100? This makes no sense whatsoever.

The new technologies provide many more opportunities to serve the handicapped in new ways. It is a laudable and legitimate function of the government to encourage and fund such efforts. But please do not hamstring all new services by forcing unfunded mandates upon them.

-----  
Susan D. Hook (catvbishop@telis.org) writes:

While I agree that closed captioning is worthwhile, I believe that every government-mandated addition to production costs make the programming more expensive, and therefore more difficult for mainstream Americans to access. Consumers pay for every regulation, either through increased hardware costs, increased program costs, or increases in the costs of advertised products.

You may eventually price the people you want to help out of the communications market.

-----  
  
Sean Sullivan (ssulliva@garnet.acns.fsu.edu) writes:

I concur with your above statements regarding providing closed-caption access to the new technologies. In fact, I wouldn't stop there: if the goal is to ensure equal access to an expanding information base, then we must also ensure that economic status does not impinge on the ability of the citizen to access this vital conduit. Computer prices only decline through obsolescence - we must ensure that all Americans have the right of access until such time as the computer becomes affordable for all.

I believe this right to access is best protected through programs run through the schools and public libraries. The phenomena of the freenet will be a necessary element of any community education program. We must increase the number of these programs, and also increase the bandwidth of access in these programs, so that the poor child will be just as able to succeed as their more wealthy counterparts.

For what its worth, Sean Sullivan

-----  
Bryan Sutherland (bts8@netcom.com) writes:

I lived with deaf roommates in college and I cannot impress upon you enough how valuable closed captioning is for them! It was never more apparent to me than when the presidential candidates held a debate and they were able to "hear" what was being said. If we expect everyone to make intelligent decisions (including those that affects America's political future), we need to ensure access to as much information as possible!

I realize that closed captioning is expensive but the benefits cannot be measured financially! Maybe we could add a small surcharge to all television delivery systems such as cable, satellite, wireless cable, etc., similar to what is currently added to telephone bills to support the programs that provide TDDs (Telecommunications Devices for the Deaf). This fund could be used to provide captioning services for programs which are so critical such as the political debates!

Thanks for your time,  
Bryan Sutherland  
1401 Red Hawk Circle, G209  
Fremont, CA 94538  
-----

Dirk Hartogs (dirk@cra.canon.com) writes:

Television is a vital part of modern life. You may also want to consider the importance of telephones for business and personal one-to-one communication.

The millions of Americans who are hard of hearing can also benefit enormously from promoting end-to-end digital telephony, notably ISDN, as an immediate to near term replacement for POTS. While ISDN is attracting a notable following in the data communications-Internet access-Information Superhighway arena, its attractiveness for voice communications is often overlooked. Voice over ISDN appear to have the following advantages over traditional technology: (1) high frequencies better represented, allowed vastly improved clarity, not just a louder signal (2) more efficient use of expensive cable plant by telephone companies (i.e. two simultaneous and independent calls per cable pair) (3) configuration and future offering flexibility. (AT&T offers ISDN telephones on a promotional basis for as little as \$105.)

-----  
Scott Thomas Littleton (slittleton@occ-uky.campus.mci.net) writes:

I agree 100% that tv programs should be close-captioned. I think the FCC should commend those stations and especially cable channels that carry close captioned currently, as well as the production companies that place it in there before the station does as I have seen on some videos on CMT.

This is a fine example of what voluntary actions can produce. It is too bad that not everyone will follow the lead.

Also, I would like you to e-mail a copy of what the FCC considers indecent material for radio broadcast in a community in the mid-west in the middle of the "bible belt."

Also as a student of radio at a college it bugs me as a listener and future (hopefully) communicator to listen to stations that receive their programs via satellite full time. I should not be able to listen to the exact same programming on a station in one city and listen to the same "station" 500 miles away. In my opinion Satellite Delivered programming full time does not meet a station's obligation to serve the public as the station doesn't directly mention, serve, or even sound like the community it is licensed to (please excuse the spelling). Also people listening to these stations believe that the station is actually a local station which to me is deceptive and fraudulent. Anyway thanks for letting me express my opinions. Also I hope you continue to do the excellent job you have done so far during your term.

Sincerely,

Scott Littleton  
-----

Lona Lea Jennings (lonaj@aa.net) writes:



Closed captioning is a very important part of my life. I have been hard of hearing for over 30 years. It wasn't until TV was captioned that I could fully participate and understand. Please do everything in your power to make sure that ALL television programs are required to be captioned. It will add so much to the lives of America's millions of hearing impaired.

-----

Natalie M Brown (bf095@scn.org) writes:

It is important that emergency information be captioned - for example, hazardous weather conditions, tornado warnings, blizzard conditions, etc. Also it would be nice if health related programs were captioned - for example, information regarding cancer and how to watch for it. It seems that local PBS and local television stations do not provide captioning for these important things. Real-time captioned would be appropriate, but even captions at the bottom of the screen would be better than nothing. Better than not having any idea at all. Another issue I have - why is it if a TV program is captioned and a cable station shows it, it does not show captions. One cable station "F/X" has Picket Fences which is captioned but it never shows up on their station as captioned. I still would like to see captions for all TV programs - at least normal hearing people have a choice of things they can watch whereas those of us who depend on captions are limited in the information we c!

an access. I hope this isn't too late to include as part of the FCC's prooposal regarding captioning. Thanks for the opportunity to have my say. How can I get information about what the FCC decides.

? Is there a way to access information on Internet? Thanks, Natalie Brown

-----

Ricky A. Headlee (jheadle@primnet.com) writes:

Chairman Hundt: I cannot image how exciting it is to head the commision at this time of great change in the communications industry. There is so much happening and so much potential for the future in communications.

I also cannot image how frustrating congress is making your job.

Although I am not disabled, I support closed captioned information. It allows me to watch at lower volume levels and still understand and at times some speakers are hard for me to understand so closed captioning leads to greater understanding of public speeches.

I am very pleased to have found your comments here and being given the opportunity to respond directly to you. I will have to admit I was looking for a way to contact the license division for amateur radio to inquire about the status of my renewal. I sent my 610 form in the summer and have not received a reply. (WB7BYJ)

Thank you for this opportunity, I feel connected to my goverment in a way I have before.

Rick Headlee

-----

Priscilla Pense (prissy.pense@rehab.state.tx.us) writes:

I am pleased to see our government do something to require video and television producers to provide their programs in an accessible format. I do the captioning on video communications produced by some state agencies and public entites in Texas and I am appalled at the attitudes of some of our public servants... that it takes a lot of time, money and effort to do video productions and they just don't want to add the extra time and costs associated with making their products accessible to a minority population. I know the ADA requires accessibility to products funded with public money; however, enforcing that is an awsome task. In fact, the cost and time involved in captioning is very miniscule in comparison to the overall costs of production. It's folks attitudes that need to change; however that just won't happen until the requirement is enforced and/or those folks have opportunity to experience non-accessible communications themselves. (As our babyboomer generation moves into the geriatric phase, many will have the opportunity.)

I fully support the requirement of accessibility of ALL productions, (whether produced with public funds, produced for cable TV, private training sessions, etc.) and regulating the quality of captioning being provided on television today. Please include some way to enforce the requirement and monitor the quality of captioning.

-----